## Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as The Alexandria Times and Advertiser

## **Out of the Attic**

## The Washington Birthnight Ball, for George in perpetuity

Alexandria Times, February 22, 2018

Image: George Washington Portrait, Office of Historic Alexandria.

wo notices were placed in The Times and Alexandria
Advertiser on Feb. 9, 1799 detailing the upcoming activities for
what would be the last Birthnight Ball George Washington
would attend. Members of a civic organization were expected
to meet at the Court House "to arrange matters for the celebration of
Lieutenant General George Washington's Birth-Day."

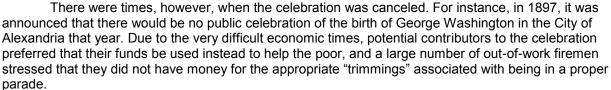
The Ball at Gadsby's, scheduled for Monday, Feb. 11, was advertised for "the gentlemen of Alexandria and its vicinity." A committee of managers, unlike in past years, posted the advertisement. The appointment of a planning committee suggests that the tradition of celebrating Washington's birth had taken root and would outlive Washington.

The Birthnight Ball did not end with the life of Washington. A local paper posted the following ad on Feb. 18, 1803:

The Gentlemen of Alexandria and its vicinity are respectfully informed, that an Assembly will be given at Gadsby's Hotel, on the 22d instant, in commemoration of the Nativity of Washington.

Based on newspaper records from the 19th century,

tavernkeepers of the city Hotel held the Birthnight Ball frequently through the 1830s, and occasionally through the 1860s, though it was held elsewhere in Alexandria through the Civil War.



In 1932, American Legion Post #22 celebrated the 200th anniversary of Washington's birth by reenacting the 1799 Birthnight Ball at Gadsby's. Although sporadically held for the next 44 years, in 1976 the annual tradition of the Birthnight Ball resumed after the legion donated the Museum to the City of Alexandria.



"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by staff of the Office of Historic Alexandria.